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ISLAMIC FOCUS

COPING WITH
Trauma

a trip
to *Syria*

of the
IN THE COMPANY
Quran



Ahlan Wasahlan...

FROM THE EDITOR

For the Prophet ﷺ, every Surah of the Noble Quran carried its own greatness. The Noble Quran was the fuel which powered the Sahaba رضى الله عنهم to achieve magnificent feats. They judged a person's capacity to lead with the link he had with the Noble Quran. Our article emphasises that our relationship with the Noble Quran needs to be meaningful, extending beyond simply reciting. It also inspires us by showing how every person can be counted among the people of the Quran.

Read about a brief visit to Syria in October 2025 with some reflections on what was a far too short travel to a historically rich land. The article highlights why a Muslim should add Syria to his or her travel bucket list. It explores the atmosphere of the ancient cities of Damascus and Aleppo and gives a glimpse into Idlib, the province that launched the war for the liberation of Syria in 2024.

As we live through our existence in this world we will experience moments and events which might cause us grief, pain, suffering and distress. Through all these

struggles we need to realize that grappling with grief, pain and hurt is normal and not something negative. The article on coping with trauma shows ways to develop mechanisms and tools to cope with loss in life. It uses Ibn al Jawzi's unique way of explaining how to come to terms with suffering and the wisdom behind it. He walks us through disbelief and denial and into acceptance with a balanced approach to troubled times.

Our article line up is rounded off with an easy to implement strategy on weathering misfortunes and turning difficult situations around including useful Duas for paying off debts and securing easy earnings.

These articles are meant to provide an insight into topics that are of current relevance to our lives and inspire conversations around them.

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Muhammad Badsha
(Moulana)

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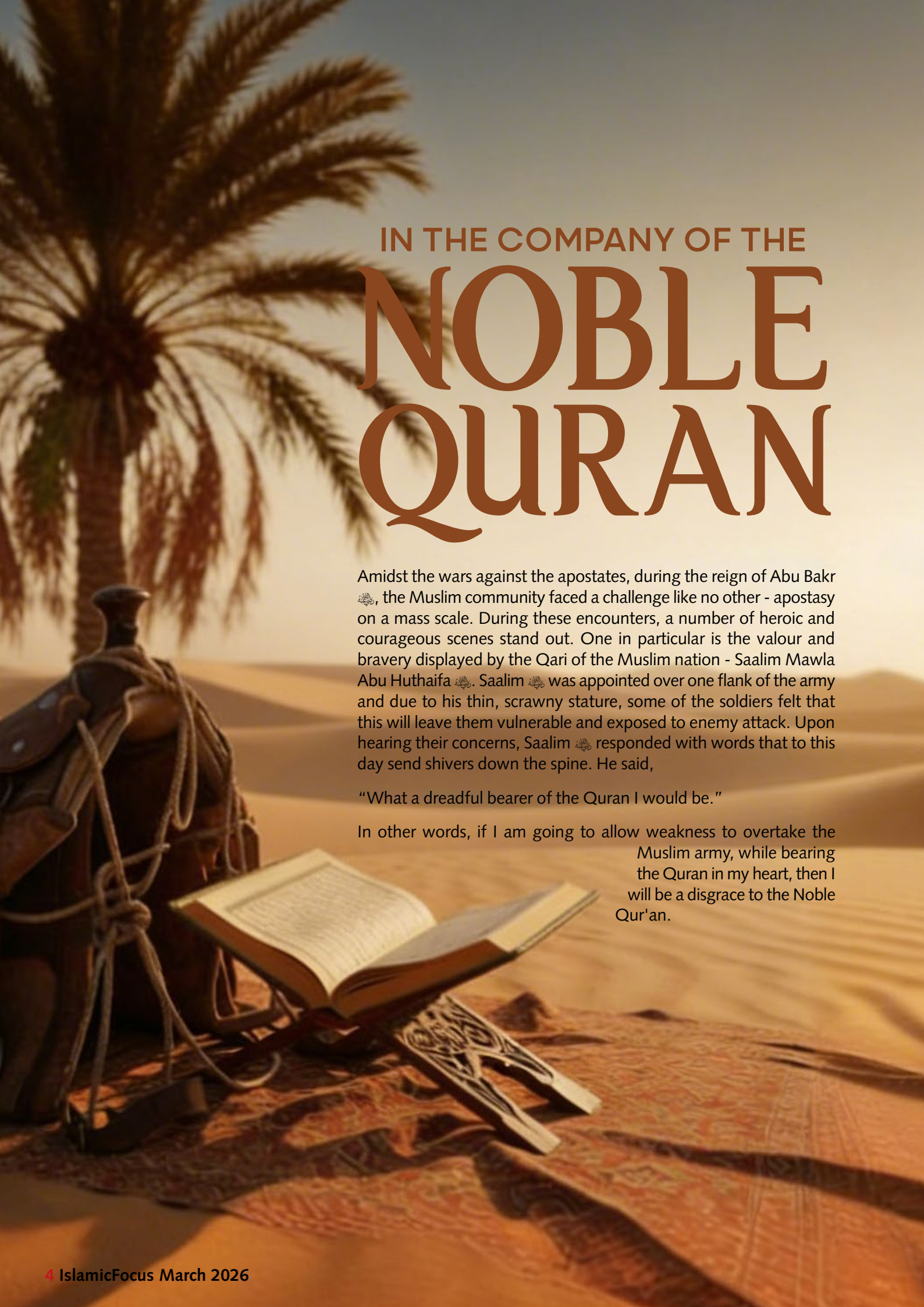


**RAMADAAN
& EID DECOR**



BAKING CHOCOLATES FOR
YOUR BISCUITS AND CAKES



The background of the entire page is a warm, golden-hued photograph of a desert landscape. In the foreground on the left, a dark leather saddle with ropes is resting on a patterned rug. To its right, an open book with Arabic text lies flat on the rug. In the background, several palm trees are silhouetted against a bright, hazy sky. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and contemplative.

IN THE COMPANY OF THE NOBLE QURAN

Amidst the wars against the apostates, during the reign of Abu Bakr ؓ, the Muslim community faced a challenge like no other - apostasy on a mass scale. During these encounters, a number of heroic and courageous scenes stand out. One in particular is the valour and bravery displayed by the Qari of the Muslim nation - Saalim Mawla Abu Huthaifa ؓ. Saalim ؓ was appointed over one flank of the army and due to his thin, scrawny stature, some of the soldiers felt that this will leave them vulnerable and exposed to enemy attack. Upon hearing their concerns, Saalim ؓ responded with words that to this day send shivers down the spine. He said,

“What a dreadful bearer of the Quran I would be.”

In other words, if I am going to allow weakness to overtake the Muslim army, while bearing the Quran in my heart, then I will be a disgrace to the Noble Qur'an.

Hearing the words of Saalim, Abu Huthaifa - who stood alongside Saalim ﷺ - was re-awakened to the reality that strength, and ultimately victory, can only be sourced from the Noble Quran. In the thick of battle, turning to none other but the people of Quran, Abu Huthaifa ﷺ made an announcement of his own:

"O people of the Quran now is the time (with all odds stacked against us), to beautify the Quran. Not only with recitation, but with acts of bravery." Details of this fascinating scene can be found in al Bidayah wa al Nihayah of Hafidh Ibn Katheer.

Such an outlook, however, only results from a strong connection with the Noble Quran; an outlook that views the Quran through the lenses of the Prophet ﷺ and the Sahaba ﷺ.

The Seerah brims with accounts of the Prophet ﷺ and the Sahaba ﷺ demonstrating what it means to be a person of the Noble Quran, often demonstrating that a connection with the Quran is not dependent on the amount of Quran a person knows by heart, or in the number of Ajzaa (chapters) a person recites. Rather, it is in the quality time a person spends interacting with the Noble Quran: studying, reflecting, and practicing.

On one occasion, the Prophet ﷺ was dispatching a battalion on an important expedition. He moved through the ranks of the army in search of a suitable commander, to afford him the prestige of leading the army. While in our minds, seniority might be a preference in selecting a leader, the standard and criteria of the Prophet ﷺ was somewhat different:

"Soldier to soldier, the Prophet ﷺ inquired about their knowledge of the Quran. Eventually, he came across one of the youngest Sahaba. When asked about what he knows of the Quran, the young man replied,

"I know such and such a Surah, and I know Surah Baqarah." Overtaken with joy, the Prophet ﷺ said,

"You know Surah Baqarah?! March forth! You are the commander of this army." (Tirmidhi, 2876)

On our journey with the Noble Quran, we often associate achievements with something of a greater magnitude than just having learnt a few Surahs perhaps. Achievement is often attached to memorizing the entire Quran, or reciting a full Quran in a single sitting, etc. For the Prophet ﷺ, every Surah of the Quran carried its own greatness, with Surah Baqarah being one of the most powerful. When was the last time we considered having learnt Surah Baqarah worthy of celebration?

Reflect upon the words of Anas Ibn Malik ﷺ:

"We admired and revered a person who had learnt Surah Baqarah and Surah Aal Imran." (Taweel Mushkil Al Qur'an of Ibn Qutaybah)

Such an outlook towards the Noble Quran can further be demonstrated from a unique incident in the life of Imam Abu Hanifah ﷺ. The great Imam had enrolled his son into a Madrasah, and upon his son completing Surah Faatihah, Abu Hanifah ﷺ sent a hefty sum of money for the teacher. As most teachers would react, he considered the amount too much and himself

being unworthy. Abu Hanifah ﷺ was angered and said:

"You do not have true value for the Quran." (Muhimmat Al Mufti of Ibn Kamal)

No amount of wealth can actually equal the worth of any Surah in the Quran. The Noble Quran is priceless.

How often do we really view a child who has learnt Surah Faatihah as having achieved a milestone? The greatest Surah of the entire Noble Quran.

It might be interesting to note that according to the prolific Tabi'i, Aamir Al Sha'bi, none of the four Khulafah (Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthmaan and Ali ﷺ) were Huffadh, with the exception of Uthmaan ﷺ.

The view might be open for debate, but the bottom line is that being included from the elite; the people of the Quran, was not exclusively attached to memorization.

This is not to downplay the feat of memorizing the entire Quran, but for us to understand that there are many ways of connecting to the Noble Quran. Not everyone has the ability to become a Hafidh, but everyone has the ability to become a companion of the Noble Quran.

If one undertakes a closer study of the Hadith on the merits and virtues of the Noble Quran, it becomes quite apparent that most Hadith highlight the significance of understanding the message of the Quran and carrying out its injunctions. Hasan Al Basri ﷺ encapsulates this in a famous saying:

"The Quran was revealed to be acted upon. But people took its

recitation as practice." (Ta'weel Mushkil Al Qur'an)

Even the well-known Hadith that we are frequently reminded of and associate to apply to the Hafidh, wherein the Prophet ﷺ said, "It shall be said to the companion of the Quran - 'Recite, and rise up, recite as you recited in the world. For indeed your rank shall be at the last verse that you recite.'" (Tirmidhi, 2914)

The immediate understanding that usually comes to mind is that such an honour applies to the one who has memorized the Quran. How will anyone else have the ability to recite the Noble Quran on the day of Qiyaamah and continue to ascend the ranks of Jannah except one who has the Quran in his heart?

However, several classical hadith scholars like Allamah Tibi, and Mulla Ali Al Qari rahimahumallah explain this to be a virtue acquired not through memorization, but through one's understanding and practice of the Noble Quran. Even though not a Hafidh, in accordance to practice and knowledge of the Quran, one will divinely be granted the ability to recite and ascend the ranks of Jannah (Paradise). From the evidence presented is that many Sahaba recited more Quran than Abu Bakr ؓ, as well as memorized more of it than him (based on the view that Abu Bakr ؓ did not memorize the entire Quran), yet he out-ranks them all. This is due to his close adherence to the teachings of the Quran, as well as his deep understanding of it.

Coming back to the hadith cited at the beginning, wherein the Prophet

ﷺ preferred the appointment of a young Sahabi to lead the army due to him having learnt Surah Baqarah. After his appointment, another Sahabi remarked:

"Oh Messenger of Allah ﷺ, nothing prevented me from learning Surah Baqarah except the fear that I will not be able to discharge the right of the Surah (in recitation or practice)."

The Prophet ﷺ replied:

"Continue learning the Quran, reciting it and propagating it. Undoubtedly the example of one who learns the Quran and fulfils its right is like an open bag of musk, permeating its surroundings. And the example of one who learns the Quran but falls short in discharging its right, is like a closed bag of musk."

The response of the Prophet ﷺ draws our attention to a vital element, and that is not to delay in learning the Noble Quran. A person should not wait for the "opportune" moment. Rather, the journey in creating a meaningful bond with the Quran should be undertaken, regardless of our shortcomings. There will always be goodness associated with the Quran.

Lastly, an effective way of staying motivated on this journey is to enhance our knowledge on the inimitability and miraculous aspects of the Noble Quran. Primarily that which is regarded as the ultimate miracle of the Quran - its linguistic miracle. We live in a world where everything is continuously changing - rivers change course, civilizations rise and fall, languages evolve, but

the language of the Noble Quran remains supreme.

The linguistic miracle of the Noble Quran can be understood and appreciated in two ways. The first is through inference. From the dozens of incidents related to the pagans of Makkah Mukarramah, and the impact of the Quran on their hearts, it is sufficient to understand the unmatched linguistic miracle of the Noble Quran.

The second way is to study the language and be able to appreciate - firsthand - the beauty of the Noble Quran. This will allow us to experience a taste of what the great Sahabi, Jubayr Ibn Mut'im ؓ (and many others), experienced. Before his conversion to Islam, he was taken captive at the battle of Badr. He later recounted the following:

"I heard the Prophet ﷺ recite Surah Tur in the Maghrib Salaah. As he recited the verse, 'Were they created from nothing or did they create themselves...', it was as if my heart was about to fly." (Bukhari, 4854) That was the moment that faith entered the heart of Jubayr Ibn Mut'im ؓ.

Article by Moulana Mohammed Ali Desai



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COPING WITH Trauma

As we live through our existence in this world we will experience moments and events which might cause us grief, pain, suffering and distress. This could be occasioned by the loss of a person we love, or some object we had an attachment to, or even a way of life we were accustomed to. At the times of turmoil, emotion can be intensely painful, affecting all aspects of our lives and relationships. Through all these struggles we need to realize that grappling with grief, pain and hurt is normal and not something negative. The test is to develop mechanisms and tools to cope with the trauma and loss in life.

The Prophet ﷺ experienced many losses throughout his life

and taught us that grief is real and a natural emotional response. He showed us that it is permissible to show our feelings of sadness when we lose someone or something precious. He visited Ubadah ibn Saamit ؓ during his illness, accompanied by the Sahaba ؓ. The Prophet ﷺ began to weep and on seeing this, the tears of the Sahaba ؓ also started to flow. He remarked, "Allah ﷻ does not punish the shedding of tears, or the grief of the heart, but punishes or grants mercy for the utterances of this," (and he pointed to his tongue).

The challenges that life throws up take different forms. Someone might be battling a life-threatening illness, someone else is facing enormous financial challenges, while others are going through intense physical pain in wars.

FIRST STEP

The first step in dealing and coming to terms with loss and setbacks is to surrender to the wisdom of Allah ﷻ. This has two components:

1. To acknowledge that all the actions of Allah ﷻ are full of wisdom,
2. And to accept these decisions.

Ibn al Jawzi رحمه الله explains it in the following way, "I have seen many foolish people venting anger at their destiny. Some of them developed weaker faith by objecting to destiny. Some have turned away from Islam because they said, 'What use is it for a Creator who is in no need of harming us to create people then have them disintegrate after death?'"

Ibn al Jawzi رحمه الله answers this by saying that it has been established that Allah ﷻ is the owner, and the owner has the right to control what He owns as He wishes. It is also established that Allah ﷻ is Al Hakeem (All Wise) and never acts without purpose. People are not comfortable with admitting this at times due to the fact that they notice how things are built up then taken apart in this world. In doing so, they make the mistake of comparing Allah ﷻ's actions to the way His creation acts. For us, tearing down something after building it is meaningless.

Ibn al Jawzi رحمه الله replies to this by stating, "How do you determine that taking something apart after building it is unwise? Was it not through the intellect and reasoning

power given by the very same Creator? The question you need to then ask is, how could He give you perfect intellect yet be deprived of the same Himself?

This is the same error the devil made. He judged Allah ﷻ's wisdom using his own intellect. A little contemplation would have made him realise that the Creator of his intellect is Most Wise. The only thing we can conclude is to admit the limitations of our intellect and its deficiencies and say, 'This is the action of the All Wise and we do not understand the full wisdom behind it.'

Don't we see how delicious food is prepared and eaten with relish, and that we spend so much time and money on procuring and eating good food, yet we all know that it largely ends up as waste. We don't object to this apparently meaningless action because we know the overall benefit of it to our bodies. So why can't Allah ﷻ's actions have a hidden benefit as well that we are unaware of?

The most ignorant of people is a worker who wants to know the business secrets of his boss and how he is running and managing his business. He must accept and not object. In fact, if the only objective of something happening which we can't comprehend and fathom was to test our submission to Allah ﷻ, it would have been enough as a wisdom."

BEHIND THE SCENES

At times we are exposed to the system operating behind the scenes of what's happening in

life to give us a glimpse of how the wisdom of Allah ﷻ operates. These random samples reinforce the fact that all events and occurrences have a wisdom behind them and a reason for them to take place. Even the most outwardly horrific of situations in life have a Divine Wisdom behind them.

An Australian Tabligh Jamaat went to the South Pacific Islands to call people to Islam. On returning to Australia, the leader recounted an amazing incident. It was an hour before they returned home and the local brothers asked him to pay one more visit; this time to a gangster who ran the drug trade around the Masjid and was causing problems for people living around him. He reluctantly agreed and they knocked on the gangster's door. At the third attempt the gangster burst out angrily. They calmed him down only for him to burst into tears. His brother emerges, joins him and also starts crying. Their mother comes out next and also starts crying. The Jamaat was perplexed and did not know what to make of this situation.

The drug dealer eventually explained that he was making a lot of money on the drugs but his life had lost all meaning and purpose. His wife had left him taking the kids with her. Everything was falling apart around him. The night before he had decided to end his life with an overdose. He was rushed to hospital and pronounced dead. Three hours later he got out of his coma and gained consciousness. He said that he then spoke to Allah ﷻ

saying that if there was a purpose for bringing him back from the dead, He should give him a sign. He had been sitting in his house since then in dejection until the knock on the door came. He burst out ready to fight with whoever had interrupted his wait only for it to turn out to be the sign he was awaiting.

He turned his life around, started attending the Masjid and brought his drug runners with as they changed their lives for the better. The wisdom in this situation, which seemed hopeless and then turned around, can only fully be understood if one knew the story behind the scenes. The wisdom in all our life challenges is definitely there even when we don't appreciate it.

Tough times are meant to build our faith and quality of surrender to Allah ﷻ. Hasan al Basri ؓ said, "People all behave the same during good times, but they differ in how they approach the times of hardships." Many a calamity strikes noble and good people only to increase them in surrendering to Allah ﷻ and being content with His decisions.

A BALANCED APPROACH

Ibn al Jawzi ؓ teaches us that we need a balanced approach to dealing with grief and trauma. He recounts how one day he attended the funeral of a youngster who was full of life and had a long future ahead of him. He noticed the attendees exaggerating in condemning life. They also condemned those who were negligent in

preparing for their deaths. Ibn al Jawzi ؓ said, "This is true and in its place but imagine if a person knew when he was going to die. His intelligence would force him to act and be overtaken with worry about the approaching deadline. Some people overwhelmed with such thoughts end up spending their days in the wilderness away from daily life. Sound intellect on the other hand realises that the body is the ride for the soul and one must take it easy with the ride in order to reach the destination. Staying up all night and having excessive worry will harm the body. This body is delicate and if you don't give it the necessary nourishment and rest the brain and body will suffer. If you are continuously sad your heart will become ill.

Had there not been a degree of oblivion and forgetting about death, then scholars would not have written books, and knowledge would not have been preserved because anyone who is always thinking about dying will not be productive. So, it is no surprise when people seem to forget death and times, for this is a blessing from Allah ﷻ that helps people to go about their lives productively. Yes, forgetting about death to such a degree that one wastes time, leads a life of sin, and is unconcerned about the ultimate accountability is blameworthy. On the other hand, oblivion in the right amount is as important as adding salt to food. It is a must but if its too much then the food becomes inedible. This

..an automatic response is often disbelief and trying to deny the reality of it.

balanced forgetfulness is thus a coping mechanism.

Once we understand our approach towards turmoil in our lives, it also helps us in dealing with the horrors that others are going through. The two years of the most recent phase of the Israeli genocide of the Palestinians and the unimaginable horrors that the people of Sudan are enduring are brought into perspective.

DISBELIEF AND DENIAL

When tragedy first strikes, an automatic response is often disbelief and trying to deny the reality of it. The numbness we feel is a survival mechanism, a way to cope when things feel overwhelming. Even the pious experience this emotional response. Umar ؓ struggled with denial when the Prophet ﷺ passed away – he said that he had not died. Later he looked back at this moment and said that nothing had come to his mind except this thought.

To deal with this, it's helpful to acknowledge that nobody has all the answers to crisis, traumas and difficulties and most people try to do the best they can with the information they have. When you deal with denial other difficult feelings may begin to surface such as anger. To process this, understand that you are not your normal self at

such a time when abnormal events are happening. Intense feelings move on and they will pass.

Guilt might also be overwhelming – this can manifest with the “if only” words. The Hadith advises us to stop such thoughts in their tracks because this opens the door for the devil to mess with our emotions, mental wellbeing and actions. Focusing on the what ifs only make trying moments more difficult to deal with. Ubaadah ibn Saamit ؓ said to his son, “You will not get the taste of the reality of faith until you internalise that what has come your way could not have missed you, and what you missed out on could not have come to you.”

One of the strongest tools for getting to grips with losing loved ones or dealing with the horrific slaughter of babies and innocent people in wars is to visualize Paradise. Ibn al Jawzi ؓ says that a Muslim must not become frustrated with illness or approaching death and should try and maintain patience and a balanced equilibrium as much as possible. Death relieves a person from the stress and heavy

burdens of life that he carries. Don't feel anxious when death is mentioned for the ride (the body) dies not the rider or the souls.

Ibn al Jawzi ؓ acknowledges that he also feels sad at the death of a relative, imagining their bodies rotting away in the grave. He writes, “I then read the Hadith that the souls of the believers will be in a bird which sits in the trees of Paradise until Allah ﷻ orders them to return to their owners' bodies on the Day of Judgement.” (Muwatta) He goes on to say that the departure of the soul is towards comfort. The body is but a shell that will disintegrate so don't think about the physical aspect. Visualise how the souls have moved to a zone of comfort and you will lessen the raw emotions of sadness that you feel. You will realise that you will soon meet up with them.

Sorrow remains because we get attached to appearances. We see a good figure disintegrating, so we feel sad. The body is not the actual person. It is only a vessel for the soul which is the person in reality and the soul does not disintegrate. Think about the joy

the souls will experience and how we will soon meet up with them again. This will lessen the sadness and make things easier to come to terms with.

After the times of trauma and turmoil, we will eventually need to move on. It might require some adjustments. There will be ups and downs even once we have accepted the reality of the loss, or the pain we are experiencing, or the hardship we are going through. This is normal.

As we go into a future where we are experiencing more violent Islamophobia, more financial uncertainty and are seeing more hurt and suffering by man against his fellow man, we need to be proactive in finding ways to cope with the uncertainties. We need to offer support to others and help each other through these fleeting moments of life.

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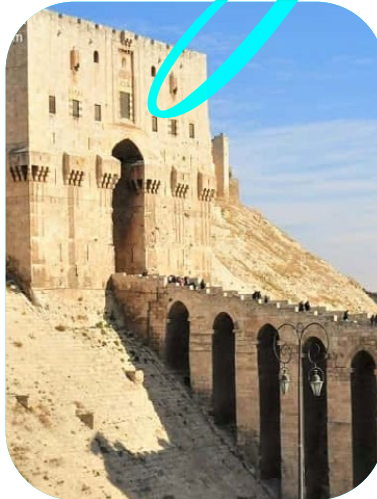
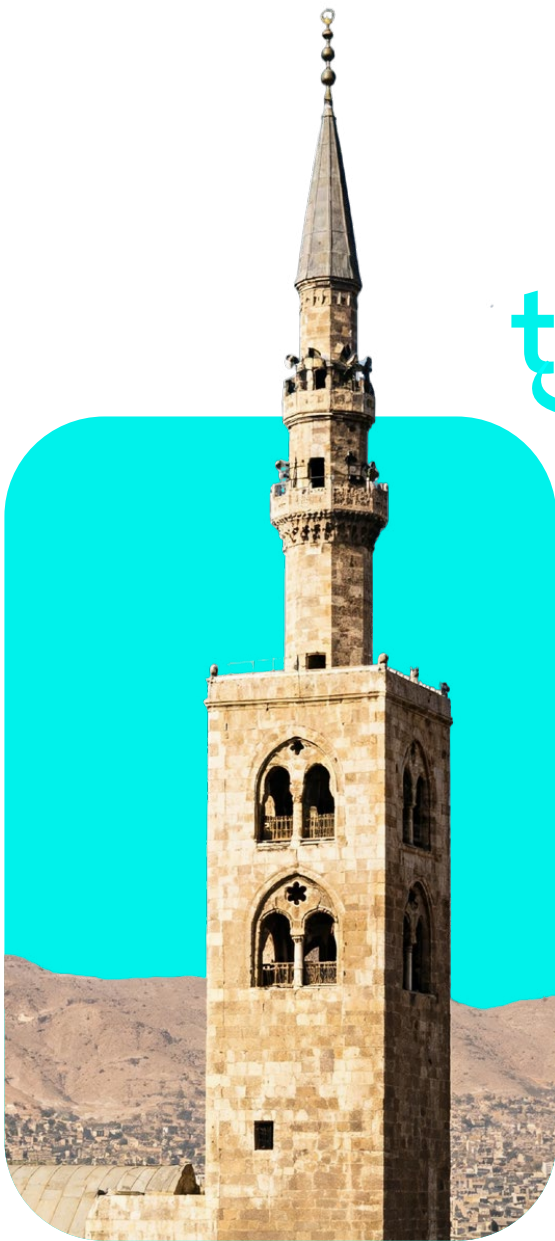
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“Do not treat people except in the way you would love to be treated by them.” (Tabrani)
“Love for people what you love for yourself.” (Musnad Ahmad)

a trip to Syria



We had the opportunity to make a brief visit to Syria in October 2025. These are some reflections on what was a far too short travel to a historically rich land.

Why should a Muslim add Syria to his or her travel bucket list?

1. It is a blessed land. "And We rescued him (Ebrahim ؑ) and Lut towards the land which we blessed for all the worlds." (Noble Quran 21:71) Allah ؑ saved Prophet Ebrahim and Lut alaihimas salaam and took them to a land which He had blessed which is identified as Shaam and includes Syria.

2. The Prophet ﷺ said, "It will be such that many armies will be gathered. An army in Shaam, an army in Iraq and an army in Yemen." A companion asked, "If I live that long, which do you choose for me?"

The Prophet ﷺ said, "I choose Shaam for you, because it is the best of places, and the land that Allah has chosen for his special servants – and if you cannot go to Shaam, then go to Yemen – and drink from your brooks and streams, for Allah ؑ has guaranteed that He will look after the land of Shaam and its inhabitants." (Abu Dawud 2475) Shaam covers modern day Syria, and the Hadith designates it as a chosen land.

3. It is a land guarded by Angels: The Prophet ﷺ said,

"Glad tidings for Shaam." We asked, "Why is that O Messenger of Allah ﷺ?" He replied, "Because the angels of Al Rahman spread their wings over it." (Tirmidhi 3954)

4. Great Islamic events have taken place in Syria. Travel there to gain an understanding of Muslim history.

5. Syria will play a significant role in coming world events:
a. It is the land of resurrection. (Musnad Ahmad, 6:457)

6. The Muslim armies will be gathered in Syria at the time

of the great tests of Dajjal and events close to Qiyamah: "The place of assembly of the Muslims at the time of the great war will be in Ghouta near a city called Damascus, one of the best cities in Syria. (Abu Dawood 4298)

7. The army of the Mahdi will be at the Umayyad Masjid in Damascus when Prophet Esa ﷺ will come back to the world: "it would be at (the time of Dajjal) that Allah would send Jesus, son of Mary, and he will descend at the white minaret in the eastern side of Damascus wearing two garments lightly dyed with saffron and placing his hands on the wings of two Angels." (Muslim 2937)

Syria is the land of Jihad through history and up to present times. It was through the Jihad of the Sahaba ﷺ that Syria came into the hands of the Muslims. By means of Jihad Nuruddeen Zengi and Salahaudeen Ayyubi rescued it from the Crusaders. The Mongol invasion was pushed back by means of Jihad and once again through Jihad Syria was liberated in 2024 from the 53 year long repressive rule of the Assad family. The Assad regime was propped up in its dying days by the Shia Hizbullah fighters of Lebanon, Iranian forces and Russian air strikes. It was the Jihad of the people that met this onslaught and freed the country.

DAMASCUS

We went first to Damascus on our trip. Entering the Damascus airport was a dream come true of walking on such significant soil. Damascus is an ancient city, one of the oldest continuously inhabited in the world. People have lived here for probably 12,000 years. The main focal point of Damascus is the impressive Umayyad Masjid. It is one of the largest and oldest

in the Muslim world, built by an early Caliph Walid ibn Abdul Malik. It stands on the site of what was one of the largest Roman temples in Syria and the current walls were the inner walls of the Temple of Jupiter.

The Umayyad Masjid influenced Islamic architecture and was regarded as a wonder of the world by medieval Muslim writers. It still largely maintains the same form of its 1300-year-old construction. It boasts an amazing atmosphere with a large, tiled courtyard. The burial place of Prophet Yahya (John the Baptist) ﷺ's head is located within the Masjid. Caliph Walid's father Abdul Malik constructed the Dome of the Rock in Al Aqsa, Jerusalem while Walid constructed the Qibli Masjid in Al Aqsa. He also expanded Masjid Nabawi ﷺ in Madinah Munawwarah to include the burial place of the Prophet ﷺ within the building.

Around the Umayyad Masjid in Damascus are old Souqs (marketplaces) and a mix of Roman, Greek, Seljuq, Mamluk and Ottoman era buildings and relics. The grave of the liberator of Aqsa, Salahaudeen Ayyubi is located behind the Umayyad Masjid.

You can wander through the Souqs soaking in the atmosphere especially towards the evenings and nights as people only really start moving by 10am and continue till late at night. There are many well-preserved graves of Sahaba ﷺ and Ulama in Damascus. The Bab Saghir graveyard contains the resting places of Bilal ﷺ, the Muazzin of the Prophet ﷺ, and Abdullah ibn



Umami Maktoum ﷺ about whom Surah Abasa was revealed. It also contains the reputed graves of three noble wives of the Prophet ﷺ, Muaawiya ﷺ, Caliph Walid and his father Caliph Abdul Malik as well as many Ulama.

One grave that stood out for us was that of Ibn Asakir, incongruously situated on a roundabout in the middle of some streets. We had recently completed a recital of his work on 40 Hadith on the Virtues of Jihad for the relief of Gaza. This was written on the instruction of the great warrior Nuruddeen Zengi who is also buried in Damascus. We then met Sheikh Mujir al Khatib who is the current Sheikhul Hadith at Darul Hadith Nuriyyah, an institution specialising in Hadith, built by Nuruddeen Zengi who appointed Ibn Asakir as the first Sheikhul Hadith. Living history! Among the students of Ibn Asakir was Sultan Salahaudeen. On our return home, Sheikh Mujir consented to hold a reading of the book live from the institute of Ibn Asakir in Damascus. Any scholar will experience a feeling of awe at being part of such a link.

Getting around in Damascus

was pretty easy. You will need to bring in cash physically until the banking system is restored. The Syrian Pound was very weak when we were there with \$100 getting you 1,1 million pounds. The biggest note was 5,000 pounds which was equivalent to around R7,72 in October 2025. This meant having to carry packets of cash when you needed to do any shopping. Food in the Souqs was quite cheap with a slice of fresh bread (similar to a pizza) being around R9 a slice. R600 got a hearty meal with several dishes and sides for five people at a good restaurant. Note that with the subsequent lifting of crippling sanctions, the infrastructure should improve significantly from the time of our visit and will most likely become even easier to use. Plans are also afoot to stabilise the currency.

Fruit, fish, meat and fresh bread and vegetables are plentiful in Damascus. Agriculture is a backbone of the Syrian economy accounting for 26% of the GDP (by comparison its 2,6% in South Africa). Although 20% of the country is desert, the rest contains fertile farmland producing wheat, olives, grapes, pistachios, almonds, tomatoes, potatoes, citrus fruit and much more grown in abundance in places largely saved from the ravages of the war. The road from Damascus to Aleppo passes large agricultural farms. The sanctions of decades made Syria self-sufficient in terms of food production.

You can move around by hiring a driver with his own car or you can use the taxis. Cars range from a merry mix of the very old to new imports coming in with the lifting of sanctions. The internet was patchy and due to decades of trade restrictions some things



might seem a little old fashioned. Hotels are a bit on the expensive side for foreigners, but cheaper places can be found.

ALEPPO

After seeing as much as we could in Damascus (which covered only a portion of what's there to be explored) we travelled to Homs, the city of Khalid ibn Walid ﷺ. War damage is very evident in the city, unlike Damascus which was largely spared. The Masjid of Khalid ibn Walid ﷺ contains his resting place and it and the surrounding area suffered large-scale destruction at the hands of Shia fighters. The people of Syria are resilient though, and rebuilding moves at a rapid rate.

We passed briefly through the city of Hama, the site of Hafiz Assad's brutal crackdown on the Muslims who wanted to live under Islam. From there it was time to go to Aleppo. This is another ancient city, one of the oldest continuously inhabited

cities in the world alongside Damascus. People were likely settled there by 8,000 BC. It was the third largest city in the Ottoman Empire after Istanbul and Cairo and played a prominent role on the ancient Silk Road as the western end. Aleppo's main attraction is the Citadel, one of the oldest and largest castles in the world. The hill on which it sits dominates the city and was in use for 5,000 years. It was occupied at various times by Assyrians, Greeks, Armenians, Romans, Byzantines, Ayyubids, Mamluks and the Ottomans among others.

It endured quite a bit of damage during the recent war and in the devastating 2023 earthquake. Alexander the Great used it, and the Roman Emperor Julian visited it in 363. It was here that Imaduddeen and Nuruddeen held off the Crusaders and Baldwin II and other Crusader leaders were imprisoned. Timur the Turco-Mongol leader destroyed parts of it in his wave of conquest, and it was attacked by the Mongols as



well.

One can see severe war damage in Aleppo's main city areas. It also has an Umayyad Masjid (which was being reconstructed after sustaining war damage) in which Prophet Zakariyya ﷺ is buried. The famous Aleppo soap made from olive and laurel oils and has been made the same way for centuries. It was reported to be used by Cleopatra. It is reputed to have health benefits for skin.

Aleppo's once-vibrant old markets are beginning to come back to life, although scars of war remain, especially from the intense bombing campaigns by Assad and Russian forces. Entering the covered market, visitors are immediately greeted by the familiar scent of soap mixed with spices and incense and by rows of shops filled with traditional goods, handcrafted souvenirs, and, recently, items adorned with the colours of the new Syrian flag.

IDLIB

The heart of the liberation

From Aleppo it was time to visit Idlib, a sprawling city close to Turkey. It was here that the internally displaced people of Syria built their refugee camps which were then added to the city. It was here that the Jihad resistance to the Assad regime and the Shia and Russian forces made a base. It was the last outpost of the revolution against the Assads and subsequently served as the launch pad for

the liberation of Syria in 2024. The area known as the Ribat was where the Mujahideen implemented a long-term plan to fight back against the Assad forces and their allies. They developed an extensive tunnel system to counteract the Russian airstrikes and keep control of land gains. They started an education campaign to prepare a shadow government alongside an Islamic education syllabus.

In November 2024 they launched an attack to take Aleppo while Russia was tied up in Ukraine and Iran was tied up with Israel. The fearless Asaib Al Hamraa units, distinguished by red headbands, led the first attacks. They wear the bands in emulation of the Sahabi Abu Dujanah ؓ who wore a red headband at the Battle of Uhud and fought courageously. In that battle Khalid ibn Walid ؓ was not yet a Muslim and fought on the opposing side. When he came to Islam, Khalid ؓ led campaign after campaign against the Romans and Persians and fittingly in the 2024 attacks the Asaib al Hamra were followed by the Khalid Brigades.

The November 2024 revolution is too long to go into in this article, but it is worth noting some similarities with the past:

1. Salahuddeen was not an Arab but a Kurd. Nuruddeen and Imaduddeen who fought the Crusaders were Turkomen. The fighters today included Muslims from various lands, notably Turkmen from Chinese-occupied East Turkestan, as well as military support from Turkey.
2. Salahuddeen first dismantled the Shia Fatimid state before liberating Aqsa, and the Mujahideen today had to first neutralise the Shia menace before opening the road to the liberation of Damascus.

The revolution was launched on 27 November 2024. By 29 November Aleppo was liberated, by 5 December the Mujahideen were in Hama and by 8 December they took Damascus. This was described as an unreal dream by the fighters. On our travels we encountered these heroic youth manning checkpoints and treating citizens with respect. A far cry from the repression of Hafez and Bashar Assad.

The people we encountered were some of the friendliest you will ever see. Everyone was willing to help. You get a sense of genuine happiness and euphoria at achieving freedom. People are optimistic but well aware of all the possible ways things could go wrong. Syria is a relatively small country. The drive from Damascus in the southern end to Aleppo in the north only takes about four hours. At various points we were but 50 kilometres away from occupied Palestine, half an hour away from Lebanon and a short drive away from Turkey.

A visit to Syria is a must to connect with Islam's glorious past and to understand how the future will play out. It gives a glimpse of what it means to be part of an Ummah (common Muslim nation) working towards a united goal. What the future holds no one can accurately predict. There is much work needed to build the country and make it prosperous. Plan a family visit. It is a short flight from Qatar, Dubai or Turkey and an even shorter drive from Jordan. Not many people speak English, but you will find a way to get around. Syria will open your mind to a fascinating past, present and future for Muslims globally.

WEATHERING THE STORM OF MISFORTUNE

All misfortune that engulfs man is caused by his actions. Allah ﷻ says, “All calamities that afflict you are caused by your own doings.” (Surah Shura, Verse: 30) In Surah Nisa, Allah ﷻ says, “Because of the wrongs of the Jews, We deprived them of the wholesome things that were (initially) permitted for them.” “This is an established fact”, says Moulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi ﷺ. (Merits of Seeking forgiveness, pg. 10) However, a natural trait in man is that he reaps credit for the good and he heaps blame on others for the mishaps.

THE PROPHETIC WAY

When Rasulullah ﷺ was treated so brutally by the residents of Taif, he left the town and went to the nearest spot of safety. There he supplicated to Almighty Allah with words that are a lesson for every victim of suffering. Among those words were the following, “O Allah! If You are not displeased with me, then I do not care (about the ill-treatment I have received).” The moral here is that in times of difficulty, one should expect the root cause to be one's own misdeeds. Without this diagnosis, it is impossible to treat the problem.

Man by nature is a sinner, but “The best of these sinners are those who repent,” said Rasulullah ﷺ. (Sunan Tirmidhiy, hadith: 2499, also see: Hidayatu-Ruwat, hadith: 2280) He also said, “Indeed sometimes a man is deprived of his sustenance due to the sin he commits.” (Sunan Nasa'iy; Targhib, vol. 3, pg. 313)

If we view the present global social and economic crises, as well as the alarming level of inflation in this light, we will actually be on our way towards eradicating this dilemma. The greatest barrier between man and the mercy of his creator is his sins. Hence, if he repents for this, there will be no barrier any longer!

ISTIGHFAR (SEEKING FORGIVENESS)

Moulana Thanwi ﷺ writes further, “The real cure for every predicament is to refrain from sins and to seek pardon for the misdeeds of the past.”

Shaykh Jafar As-Sadiq ﷺ, a great sage of his age once offered the following counsel to another stalwart of his era Imam Sufyan Thawri ﷺ. He said, “When your earnings become difficult, then beg Almighty Allah to forgive your sins.” (Shuabul Iman, hadith: 641)

Rasulullah ﷺ has given three assurances for the one who

constantly begs Allah's forgiveness by repeating the words: Astaghfirullah etc:

1. Allah ﷻ will replace his worries with relief,
2. Narrowness will be changed to ease, and
3. Allah ﷻ will provide sustenance for him through avenues from which he never anticipated. (Sunan Abi Dawud, hadith: 1513)

INCIDENT OF HASAN BASRI ﷺ

The illustrious Hasan Basri ﷺ was seated among his students when a man came and complained to him of drought. Hasan Basri ﷺ advised him to recite the words: Astaghfirullah. After some time, another man appeared and complained to him of lack of means. Hasan Basri ﷺ gave him the same prescription (i.e., Astaghfirullah) as he did with the third person who whined that he had no children. Upon this, his students

remarked, "O Sheikh! You gave the same advice to three people, each with a different predicament?" He replied, "I did so in accordance to the guarantee that Allah ﷻ gave us in the Holy Quran; Allah ﷻ said, "Beg the forgiveness of your Rabb, for indeed He is Most Forgiving; He will then send torrential rains upon you (the solution for drought), He will increase your wealth (the answer for financial constraint) and (He will increase) your children (the cure for infertility)." (Surah Nuh, Verses: 10-12) (Refer: Ruhul Ma'ani)

It was the constant habit of Rasulullah ﷺ to recite Istighfar daily. (Sahih Bukhari, hadith: 6307) Some Sahabah ﷺ have reported that they heard him recite Astaghfirullah up to 100 times in a single gathering! (Fathul Bari, hadith: 6307)

The time for Muslims to repent on a global scale has dawned. To do so is firstly, the command of Allah ﷻ, secondly the Sunnah of Rasulullah (ﷺ), and thirdly, it is a potent formula for alleviating all sorts of predicaments, of which there is – sadly – no shortage in our era.

SUBLIME SOLUTIONS

Hasan Basri ﷺ said, "Recite Astaghfirullah whilst in your homes, at meals, on your walkways, in your marketplaces, at your gatherings and wherever else you may be, for you do not know at which time you will be blessed." (Shu'abul Iman, hadith: 647)

Raja Ibn Haywah ﷺ recounts that he heard someone in Mina

address the Hujjaj with the following, "O People! Allah will not punish you as long as you are engaged in three acts:

1. Shukr (gratitude),
2. Dua (supplication),
3. Istighfar (seeking forgiveness)." (Shu'abul Iman, hadith: 646)

To recite Astaghfirullah 100 times every morning and evening is the bare minimum.

In addition to seeking forgiveness for our sins, a concerted effort to abstain from sin is also required. This is the essence of Taqwa or having the consciousness of Allah ﷻ. Ease in livelihood, and removal of difficulties are guaranteed for those who have Taqwa (fear of Allah). (Refer: Surah Talaq Verses: 2-3)

A useful Dua for swift repayment of debts

One who is in debt should recite the following abundantly, Allahumma fini bi halalika 'an haramik, wa agh ni ni bifadhlika amman siwak. (Sunan Tirmidhi, hadith: 3563)

A DUA FOR EASY LIVELIHOOD

Frequent recital of the following phrase removes all worries, the first of which is poverty, La hawla wala quwwata illa billah. (Sunan Tirmidhi, hadith: 3601 and Majmauz Zawaid, vol. 8, pg. 179 and pg. 140)

A proven prescription for ease in income is to recite Ayah 19 of Surah Shura (Surah 42) 70 times every morning. (Ma'ariful Quran)

DO'S

1. Increase our devotion and adherence to Salah. Mufti Shafi (rahimahumallah), the author of Ma'ariful Quran, says, "It was the practice of all Prophets (alaihimus salam) to resort to Salaah when they experienced any difficulty." (How to repel poverty, Pg. 22)
2. Recite abundant Salawat (Durood) on Rasulullah ﷺ. Sheikh Muhammad Awwamah frequently suggests this for removal of all difficulty. This is deduced from a Hadith of Sunan Tirmidhi, hadith: 2457.
3. According to the Hadith of Sunan Abi Dawud and others, washing the hands before and after meals attracts barakah (blessings) in sustenance. (Al-Sirajul Munir, Vol. 2, Pg. 141)
4. By maintaining family ties, one is guaranteed expansion in income as well as a better quality of life. (Sahih Bukhari, hadith: 2067)

DONT'S

1. Abstain from extravagance, it is the most blatant form of ingratitude! "Allah ﷻ hates the unappreciative ones." (Surah A'raf Verse: 31)
2. Avoid riba (interest) in all its forms. This is the main ingredient in the present crisis! After all it's a war with the Master of the universe.
3. Do not look at those above you, rather take a lesson from the less fortunate ones. This will instil contentment with what one possesses. (Sahih Muslim, hadith: 7356 with Sharh Nawawi) Contentment is the root of happiness and satisfaction.

May Allah ﷻ remove the suffering of Mankind throughout the world, and may He restore peace, prosperity and satisfaction on Earth, soon.

HADITH

VERIFICATION SERIES 19

In this series we bring you a selection of topics from hadithanswers.com



ABSTAINING FROM SIN WHEN FASTING

Question: Can you share the source for this narration?

Sayyiduna 'Umar ؓ said: "Fasting isn't merely withholding from food and drink alone, rather, it is also withholding from lying, falsehood, vain speech and taking (unnecessary) oaths."

Answer: : Imam Abu Bakr ibn Abi Shaybah ؒ has recorded this statement of Sayyiduna 'Umar ibn al Khattab ؓ.

Sayyiduna 'Umar ؓ said: "Fasting is not only about abstaining from food and drink; rather, it also entails refraining from lying, falsehood, idle talk, and needless/false oaths."

(Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaybah: 8975. Also see: Kitabut Targhib wat Tarhib of Abul Qasim Al Asbahani: 1774)

And Allah ﷻ Knows best.

RAMADAAN: A MONTH TO RECITE QURAN AND FEED PEOPLE

Question: What is the reference for this?

When Ramadan began, Imam Ibn Shihab az Zuhri ؒ would say, "It is only about reciting the Qur'an and feeding others."

Answer: Hafiz Ibn 'Abdil Barr ؒ has recorded this.

Yunus ibn Yazid said: "When Ramadan commenced, Ibn Shihab ؒ [would say], "This is the month to recite Quran and feed people."

(At Tamhid, vol. 4, pg. 98. Also see: Lataiful Ma'arif, pg. 305, Al Maktabul Islami edition)

And Allah ﷻ Knows best.

THE BENEFITS OF OCCASIONAL HUNGER

Question: Could you please provide the reference?

"Hunger purifies the heart, suppresses desires, and causes subtle/precise knowledge."

Answer: : Hafiz Khatib Baghdadi and Imam Abul Qasim al Asbahani ؒ have recorded this narration as the statement of the famous ascetic, Bishr ibn al Harith Al Hafi ؒ.

Bishr ؒ said: "Hunger cleanses the heart, restrains desires and leads to refined knowledge/ understanding."

(Tarikh Baghdad, vol. 5, pg. 403 and Kitabut Targhib wat Tarhib: 885. Also see Siyaru A'lamin Nubala, vol. 10, pg. 471)

And Allah ﷻ Knows best.

THE TWO BATTLES A BELIEVER FACES DURING RAMADAAN

Question: : Please provide the correct reference for his statement:

Al-Hafiz said:

"Know that in the month of Ramadaan, there are two Jihads of the self which take place for the believer: Jihad of the daytime with fasting. Jihad of the nighttime with standing for prayer."

Answer: : This is the statement of Hafiz Ibn Rajab Al Hambali ؒ.

He writes, "During the month of Ramadan, people are confronted with two [internal] struggles. One during the day while fasting and the other during the night to stand for [tarawih]. Whoever overcomes these two battles, fulfils their rights and is patient, will be granted reward without limit."

(Lataiful Ma'arif, pg. 319, Dar Ibn Kathir edition)

And Allah ﷻ Knows best.

A WAY TO FILL ONE'S HEART WITH IMAAN (FAITH)

Question: : What is the reference for the following narration?

Whoever has three qualities, Allah will fill his heart with faith: the company of a jurist, recitation of the Quran, and fasting.

Answer: Imam Ibn 'Abdil Barr ؒ has cited this as the statement of Sayyiduna 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud ؓ.

Sayyiduna 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud ؓ said: "Three things, if found in a person, Allah will fill his heart with Iman: the companionship of a Jurist [a person well versed in the knowledge of Din], recitation of the Quran, and fasting."

(Bahjatul Majalis, vol. 2, pg. 128. Also see: Al Adabush Shar'iyyah, vol. 3, pg. 544)

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